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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 001948

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FOR NEA/ELA, DRL/NESCA AND IO/RHS
GENEVA FOR CASSAYRE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/13/2029

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [UN](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: INDEPENDENT NGO COALITION FOR UPR REPORT SPLINTERS

REF: A. CAIRO 1925
[1](#)B. CAIRO 1850
[1](#)C. CAIRO 1433
[1](#)D. CAIRO 814

Classified By: Economic-Political Minister-Counselor
Donald A. Blome for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. KEY POINTS

-- (C) The coalition of independent NGOs formed to submit a September report for the February 2010 UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR) splintered following disagreements over using legal versus "political" language in the introduction.

-- (C) The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights' (EOHR) leak to the press of disagreements over tone while negotiations were ongoing has created tensions with the coalition chair, The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies.

-- (U) A third NGO, Maat, assembled a coalition of 49 organizations to submit another report that highlights specific cases of human rights violations.

-- (C) The quasi-governmental National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) submitted a report calling for many of the advances it has recommended in the past on issues such as the Emergency Law, combating torture and increasing freedom of expression. A prominent NCHR member told us he hoped the February UPR would help create momentum for reform.

[1](#)2. (S) Comment: The overall substance of the three independent NGO reports appears to be similar, and a single report probably would have brought more civil society coherence and weight to the UPR. EOHR's leak to a newspaper widely thought to be controlled by Interior Ministry State Security (SSIS) that it could not agree to the report's tone indicates that the organization wanted to protect its equities with SSIS, especially since the disagreement centered on characterizing Egypt as a "police state." Other NGOs have expressed concern in previous years that EOHR has provided too much information to SSIS about private, sensitive conversations. End comment.

Independent NGO Coalition Splinters

[1](#)3. (C) In September, independent NGOs and the quasi-governmental National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) submitted reports to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) for the February 2010 Universal Periodic Review of Egypt's "fulfillment of its human rights obligations and commitments." While the Cairo Institute for Human Rights

Studies (CIHRS) originally intended to organize a coalition of independent NGOs to submit a single, overall report, the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) publicly broke from the coalition, and a third NGO, Maat, assembled its own separate coalition. As the only Egyptian human rights NGO with an office in Geneva to expressly monitor the UN Human Rights Council, CIHRS aimed since the early summer to head a single NGO coalition that would submit an overall report.

¶4. (C) However, in early September, EOHR Secretary-General Hafez Abu Seada told the Interior Ministry State Security (SSIS)-linked daily, "Rose Al Youssef," that he was leaving the coalition due to disagreements over the report's tone. In mid-September Abu Seada told us he left the CIHRS coalition based on disagreements with the report's introductory language. He objected to language describing Egypt as a "police state," and favored "objective, legal" language over "judgmental" characterizations in the text, such as "immoral MFA practices." He believed that the UN UPR context necessitated using "the language of international law."

¶5. (C) CIHRS Director Bahey Al-Din Hassan told us in early October that he wanted the report to underline the GOE's lack of political will to enact human rights reforms. "The problem is not due to a lack of legislation," he asserted. Hassan criticized the EOHR and Maat reports as "too legalistic," and limited by not addressing extra-legal steps by the Interior Ministry to interfere with NGOs. Hassan said that while he was trying to close the gap between EOHR's positions and the rest of the coalition, Abu Seada leaked the disagreement to the press in "breach" of the coalition's

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agreement not to air differences publicly.

¶6. (C) Hassan noted that the coalition will not release its report publicly until the GOE submits its own report by November 8. He explained that this decision is aimed at not allowing the GOE to counter the NGO coalition's points, and at avoiding further publicity over the "controversy" with EOHR. Hassan declined to provide us with a copy of the report, per the coalition's agreement, but noted that it focuses on torture, restrictions on freedom of expression, discrimination against religious minorities and SSIS infringement on civil liberties. Hassan told us that SSIS had requested a copy of the report October 4, but he had refused. He expected that SSIS would be able to steal the report from his e-mail system.

¶7. (C) Hassan had "low expectations" for the February UPR session, and predicted that Egypt's allies would help the GOE deflect most substantive criticism. He wondered whether the U.S. had agreed to "go easy" on Egypt in the UPR process in return for GOE cooperation on the UNHRC freedom of expression resolution in September. We responded that there is no such agreement.

Substance of the Reports

¶8. (U) EOHR's publicly released report criticizes the Emergency Law and the new draft counterterrorism law (ref A), which it asserts codifies human rights violations. The report also takes issue with laws enabling torture, restricting freedom of assembly, press freedom, and the establishment of political parties and NGOs. The Maat coalition report follows a format roughly similar to the State Department Human Rights Report, citing specific cases of human rights violations. This report covers many of the same issues as the EOHR document, but contains an expanded section on socio-economic rights. The quasi-governmental NCHR makes many of the recommendations in its May 2009 annual report (ref D), such as ending the Emergency Law, combating torture, increasing freedom of expression protections, and

easing up on NGOs. It recognizes some recent achievements, such as the 2008 Child Law Amendments, and calls for the GOE to improve economic, social and cultural rights.

NCHR Report

19. (C) NCHR member Hossam Badrawi who chaired the UPR report drafting committee told us in mid-September that "some in the GOE got very angry over the report." (Note: Per ref B, Badrawi is also a member of the Shura Council and the influential National Democratic Party (NDP) policies committee. End note.) Badrawi downplayed expectations for GOE action before February, saying he does not expect the passage of any significant legislation, but he hopes for positive GOE "statements" on human rights. He praised the transparent UPR process as positive for the GOE's "credibility," and hoped that NDP reformers would be able to take advantage of the UPR session in February to generate momentum for positive change. He described NCHR's outreach to 156 NGOs throughout the country to prepare the report. Separately, MFA Deputy Director for Human Rights Omar Shalaby told us the MFA found the NCHR report "mostly objective, largely accurate and non-provocative."
Scobey